


SANGER 1913

# Bandwagon


THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1820 Sixty-Fifth Season 1885



Van Amburgh  
Chas. Reiche & Bro's  
*NEW*  
RAIL ROAD SHOWS

Van Amburgh in ye elden time



Van Amburgh of to day

HYATT FROST MANAGER 39<sup>TH</sup> YEAR  
Admission 25 Cents

JULY-AUGUST 1981





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 25, No. 4

JULY-AUGUST 1981

Fred. D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Van Amburgh title is one of the most venerable in circus history. While other great showmen such as James Raymond and Jerry Mugivan operated under the Van Amburgh banner, the title is most closely identified with Hyatt Frost. The 1885 season was Frost's swan song, and except for leasing the title to the Ringlings in 1889 and Walter L. Main in 1890, he retired from the circus business after this venture.

This 16 page courier is the work of the notable press agent and bill writer Chas. H. Day. Most closely associated with Adam Forepaugh, Day also left the circus business after this season. The mention of 1820 as the beginning of the Van Amburgh show had its origin in Day's fecund imagination, and certainly not in historical fact. The original piece was printed by Crane & Co. of New York, a noted

theatrical printer of the period, and is from the Pfening collection.

### CHS ELECTION UPCOMING

CHS President Tom Parkinson has appointed Hans Dulle, 1811B St. Marys Blvd., Jefferson City, Mo. 65101, Election Commissioner. Ballots for the election of Directors and Officers will be mailed by the Election Commissioner in the fall of this year.

If you wish to nominate a CHS member as an officer or director please mail the nomination, with a second, to Mr. Dulle. Directors can only be nominated for a Division by members from that Division. The office of Vice President will be vacant. (The current Vice President is traditionally nominated for President.) The Secretary-Treasurer has accepted the nomination to serve again.

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## HARTFORD FIRE INFO NEEDED

Readers with any knowledge of the disastrous Ringling-Barnum Circus fire that occurred in Hartford, Conn., in July 1944 are asked to contact a Washington author who is preparing a book on the tragedy.

The author wishes to hear from anyone who has firsthand knowledge of the fire, who has photographs or anecdotes, or who has any information of the tragedy that would be of help in preparation of the book.

You may contact the author, Del Marth, at 1325 Eighteenth St., NW, Apt. 308, Washington, D.C. 20009.

## CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

May 1, 1980 thru April 30, 1981

Balance in First National Bank May 1, 1980 \$152.47

### Receipts:

Dues	\$15446.50
Subscriptions	2460.75
Back Issue Sales	714.05
Advertising	2065.30
Convention	1858.00

Total Receipts \$22544.60

\$22697.07

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Bandwagon Postage	549.66
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Sec'y-Treas. Postage	570.00
Convention Expense	829.94
Rosters	606.14
Canadian Exchange & Bank Service Ch.	75.87
Misc. Expense	108.73

Total Disbursements \$22143.02

Balance in First National Bank April 30, 1981 \$ 554.05

Audited statement prepared by Gerald F. Combs  
July 31, 1981.

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*Joe McKennon*  
JOE MCKENNON



# SANGER'S GREATER EUROPEAN SHOWS

## SEASON OF 1913

by Gordon M. Carver

### Introduction

*This article was difficult to prepare. There was little written about the Sanger show in either the **New York Clipper** or the **Billboard**. Nor was there either a printed program or route book. Further, the program and route never appeared in public print. The show for all practical purposes was a well kept secret. However, from the collections of Fred Pfening, Jr., and deceased member Don Smith much that was helpful was obtained. But most help came from the collection of photos of the show, now in the possession of Alexander Clark, copies of which he so graciously furnished your writer. Without these it would have been virtually impossible to prepare any complete story about the show. So what follows is, we feel, an unusually complete picture of a small railroad circus in 1913.*

In 1908 Jerry Mugivan and Bert Bowers, two young men who had been working concessions on various circuses had combined forces and bought the Howes Great London Circus. Having been successful in running this small show, they added to their holdings by purchasing the defunct Dode Fiske Circus in 1911 and changing its name to Sanger's Greater European Circus. When this show went out in 1911 it was on ten cars — one advance, four flat cars, three stocks and two coaches. But by 1913, the year we are reviewing, they had enlarged the show slightly by adding two coaches so that the consist was now 12 cars — one advance, four flat cars, three stock cars and four coaches. One

of the coaches was a privilege car with the usual food dispensing facilities as well as slot machines and gaming tables where Mugivan and Bowers could recover some of the money paid to their employees. They had learned their lessons well and knew how to make a buck and had little concern whether it came from the show's customers or employees.

The winter of 1912-13 was spent at the state fairgrounds in Montgomery, Alabama, where facilities for both of their shows were very adequate and comfortable. They had been there for six years now and would continue to spend the winter at this location for another couple or so years before moving their winterquarters north to Peru, Indiana. The news out of Montgomery was the usual winterquarter's gossip about refurbishing and rebuilding (usually referred to as building new) wagons and equipment and the training of the elephants and other animals. It was reported that a complete new spread of canvas was on order and a new bannerline had been received from the U.S. Tent and Awning Co., of Chicago.

Chris Zeitz, who formerly had been with the Otto Floto Circus and the Sells-Floto Circus was, with four assistants, training the elephants for the two shows. Sanger's in 1913 would have four large elephants in its herd.

**Photo 1—From left to right can be seen the three stock cars, four flats and one of the four coaches. About half the wagons have been unloaded. But one four horse team in the center is waiting to take wagons to the lot. Clark Col.**



While they were being taught some new routines, mostly the bulls were being kept busy and in shape so that they would not forget the old routines. Sam Dockrill, whose home was in Delavan, Wisconsin, and who at one time had been Equestrian Director on the Barnum & Bailey Circus was in winterquarters training liberty and menage horses for both of the shows.

Besides the rebuilding of wagons and equipment and the training of animals, work on the railroad cars was progressing. All the flats and cars were to be yellow with blue lettering. This color scheme with the red wagons on the flats would give the show a very flashy appearance on its arrival in the towns on its route. This work was being done under the supervision of John Martin, trainmaster.

The 1913 season for Sanger's Greater European Shows opened on Saturday, March 29, with performances being given in the winterquarters at Montgomery. It was the start of a long tour lasting just one day short of eight months. It was the third season for the show but to be its last under the title Sanger's Greater European Shows. On Saturday, October 3, at Commerce, Georgia, it played as Sanger's Greater European Shows but when it opened the following Monday, October 5, it was Robinson's Famous Shows. Mugivan and Bowers had further added to their stable of circuses by purchasing from Danny Robinson, shortly before this, his 20 car Robinson's Famous Shows. So far as we know, however, the size of Sanger's, now Robinson's Famous, did not at this time change. It was just a change in name to capitalize on the popularity of the Robinson name in the south. While there was apparently no change in the size of the show at this time, by 1915 Robinson's Famous Shows was moving on 24 cars — two advance, six stocks, nine flats and seven coaches. However, none of this is of concern to us in this story. It is interesting to note in the pictures that the Sanger name did not appear on any of the wagons, only on the railroad cars so that a quick change of name was not that difficult over a weekend.

As will be noted in the route shown elsewhere, after the opening, a rapid four week move through Alabama, Georgia, South and North Carolina, and Virginia found the show on Tuesday, April 29, in Crisfield, Maryland. The next four weeks were spent in Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania. Then after four towns in Ohio the show moved into Windsor, Ontario, on Monday June 2. It stayed in Canada through July 8. Following this, after two weeks in New York it moved into New Jersey for nine stands in the northern part of that state.

It is from this short stay in the Garden State that much of the data on



the show was obtained. All of the pictures that accompany this article were taken in Newton, a county seat, on Thursday, July 31. A few years ago on a visit to Newton we were able to locate the lot where the show pitched its tents in 1913. It is interesting that it looked much the same then as it had almost 60 years earlier. In town on the square where the parade passed, the locally famous hostelry, the Cochran House, was missing having been destroyed by fire a few years before and replaced by a Super-Market. However, it was the appearance of the Cochran House in the pictures that enabled us to locate the show.

ANNISTON Wed. April 9

**SANGER'S**  
GREATER EUROPEAN SHOWS  
COMBINED  
**A MIGHTY ARENIC WONDERLAND**  
500 PEOPLE AND BEAUTIFUL HORSES  
RICHEST COSTUMES  
MAGNIFICENT EQUIPMENT  
FAMED AS THE WORLD'S SHOW BEAUTIFUL  
FINEST SPECIAL TRAINS OF PALACE CARS  
**MUSEUM-MENAGERIE**  
HIPPO-MENAGERIE  
PRESENTING IN GRAND ARRAY THE WORLD'S BEST  
ARTISTS FEATURES RIDERS DAREDEVIL ACTS  
AMAZING DISPLAYS

This newspaper ad was used very early in the season for the date at Anniston, Ala., Pfening Col.

While in New Jersey the show encountered some opposition from Frank A. Robbins Circus which had preceded it in Montclair and Morristown by about two weeks. Montclair had also seen the Oklahoma Ranch Wild West Show, but very early in the season so that it probably had little or no effect on the business of the Robbins and Sanger's shows. It is of course, probable that Sanger's was affected by the earlier visits of Robbins in these two towns.

While Sanger's had only four sixty foot flats and three sixty foot stock cars (see photo 1), it was able to load a surprising amount of equipment. Although no wagon lists or train loading orders are known to exist, from the unusually good and complete set of pictures it is not difficult to prepare a train loading order for the



Photo 3—One of the five cross cages being pushed into the menagerie top after the parade. Clark Col.

wagons with a reasonable likelihood of its being fairly correct. Such a list follows for what it's worth:

#### Flat car 1

Cookhouse, 13' long  
Water wagon and cookhouse, 10'  
Horse top and Blacksmith, 11'  
Cross cage, 9' (loading width 6')  
Cross cage, 9' (loading width 6')  
Steam Calliope, 11'

#### Flat car 2

Concessions (tab), 11'  
Cross cage, 9' (loading width 6')  
Cross cage, 9' (loading width 6')  
Cross cage, 9' (loading width 6')  
Ticket wagon and side show props, 14'  
Menagerie and side show canvas, 14'

#### Flat car 3

Stake and chain, 10'  
2 clown carts, 3'  
Props (tab), 10'  
Trained lion act cage, 12'  
Dressing top canvas and trunks (tab), 12'

#### Flat car 4

Seat planks and jacks, 12'  
Seat planks and jacks, 12'  
Poles and stringers, 19'  
Big top canvas, 14'

Virtually all of the foregoing wagons can be found in the various pictures of the lot and parade.

As for the tents, again, the pictures are very helpful. Using them and our knowledge of the make-up of shows of this size in this period, as well as tent construction it is not difficult to give a pretty sound description of what the show looked like on the lot. The midway (see photo 2) had one candy or concession stand, the side show bannerline with eight banners and an entrance banner, the ticket wagon and entrance marquee. The side show top was probably about a 50 foot round with two 30 foot middles. Similarly, the menagerie was probably a 60 foot round with two or three 30 foot middles. This would be more than adequate to house the five cross cages, four elephants and a large candy or concession stand. It is possible that the show's performing ponies might also have been housed here, a not uncommon practice. The big top (see photo 4) was an 80 foot round with three 40 foot middles with probably eight high star-back reserved seats on the front and

Photo 2—All but one of the eight side show and entrance banners, a concession tent and the front end of the ticket wagon which also was the lead bandwagon in the parade are shown here. Clark Col.





back sides and with nine or ten high blues on each and three 34 foot rings.

All of the seats would probably accommodate about 1500 spectators. Two full houses a day (very much a rarity — most show owners operated on the equivalent of two half houses per day as their break-even point) would, with reduced prices for children, an extra fee for the starback reserves and a fifty cents general admission, bring in about \$3,000. However, as stated above the average take would be about half of that or \$1,500. The take from concessions and the side show and the various "games" of chance would be extra, of course. It is worth noting that on small shows of this type it was not unusual for the take from the "games" to pay the railroad transportation costs, in other words to get the show to the next town.

The other tents would have been the dressing-padroom top, draft stock top and the dining and cookhouse tops (see photo 5). The dressing room-padroom top (see photo 6) was probably about the same size as the side show top, a 50 foot round with two 30 foot middle pieces with the ring horses being housed under the middles. We have no way of knowing how many ring horses were carried but a guess of 12-15 might not be too wide of the mark since horses were an important part of any show of that period, much more important than today. Such ponies as the show probably carried were undoubtedly housed as I have already mentioned, in the menagerie top.

The dining department tops would have been large enough to feed the 130-150 people the show probably employed. Finally, there was one draft stock top no doubt about 30 by 70 feet. This would have been large enough to house the 32 draft horses they probably had. This number would have been very much standard for a show of this size in 1913.

Again with careful analysis of all the available pictures the parade can be listed in its entirety. There were eighteen units which when spread out in the custom of the time made a very substantial line-up nearly a half mile long, a surprising amount of free

# SANGER'S

## GREATER EUROPEAN SHOWS

Resplendent with gold and glitter, triumphant, picturesque, the World's Show Beautiful will soon be here in all its glory. We would direct your attention to some of the exclusive, especially

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—THE FUNNIEST MAN IN THE WORLD—

JOE PENTLAND AND RUDE AND RASTUS  
—THE FUNNIEST MEN IN THE WORLD—

**HI HOOSE**  
—THE FUNNIEST MAN IN THE WORLD—

SOO-SEE'S CLOWN BAND  
—A TROUPE OF TRICK HOUSE, GUNNY, ARMBARS—

But enough said, although we have scarcely covered the border of wonderland. There is a rich and rare treat in store for you, and you will be there to enjoy it.

WILL EXHIBIT AT

AFTERNOON AND NIGHT SHOWS OPEN AT 1 AND 7 P. M. PERFORMANCES BEGIN AT 2 AND 8 P. M.  
HOLDING PERIOD WEEKDAYS PARADE DAILY

This herald was printed by the Donaldson Litho Co. for the Sanger Greater European Shows in 1913. The date on this one is Hancock (Md.) May 15, 1913. Pfening Col.

entertainment for such a small show. There were 32 draft horses, at least six saddle horses, two mules, four elephants, six cages, five tableau wagons, two used as bandwagons, one steam calliope and two clown carts. The parade line-up is as follows (see photo 7A):

- Two mounted marshalls
- Bandwagon with eight musicians - 6 white horses (see photo 7B)
- Two mounted ladies on black horses
- Cage - 2 white horses
- Cage - 2 white horses
- Open cage - 2 brown horses
- Tab - 2 brown horses
- Two ladies mounted on black horses
- Tab with six piece band - 4 brown horses
- Cage - 2 white horses
- Tab - 2 white horses
- Clown cart pulled by mule (see photo 8)
- Cage - 2 white horses
- Open cage - 2 white horses
- Clown cart pulled by mule
- Tab with wild west performers up - 2 white horses (see photo 9)
- Four elephants (see photo 10)
- Steam calliope - 4 brown horses

The tab wagons except for the lead bandwagon were all very short and may have been small converted cages. And except for the lead bandwagon, one smaller tab bandwagon, and the steam calliope all wagons were, it has been noted, pulled by only two horses. To repeat, it was a surprising amount of parade for such a small show and spread out as the units were it probably took close to ten minutes to pass any given corner downtown.

After nine days in New Jersey the show moved into Pennsylvania for 15 stands in the eastern part of the state before starting south with one date in West Virginia followed by thirteen in Virginia. In Gettysburg, Pa., on Monday August 19 following the afternoon show a storm came up and blew down the big top and menagerie breaking one of the center poles in both the big top and menagerie top. Both tops were so badly torn that they could not be used and new tops were ordered rushed from the U.S. Tent and Awning Co. of Chicago.

Next they played nineteen towns in the Carolinas including a two day stand in Winston-Salem, the only town on the tour which they played for more than one day. During this tour of the Carolinas in Hillsboro, North Carolina, on Sunday morning, September 7, while the show folks were taking it easy after getting the tops up, the second newsworthy event of the season took place. The biggest

Photo 4—Here the big top is being laced preparatory to being raised. At the far left is what is believed to be the padroom-dressing top. Clark Col.





elephant in the show's herd, Mama, quietly wandered off the lot and got lost. She was not located until four days later in the woods near Hillsboro, apparently no worse for her escape. Then one week to the day later as the show was arriving in Greensboro a derailment threw the bandwagon off its flat car and destroyed it. A local wagon was used the next day as a bandwagon in the parade. A replacement was shipped from winter-quarters for the rest of the season. Aside from the change in the show's title which took place three weeks later at Gainesville, Georgia, on Sunday October 5, there were no other newsworthy events.

Neither the *Billboard* or the *New York Clipper* had any reviews nor any but the skimpiest of other news about the show. Even local papers that are



Photo 6—Interior of the men's dressing room as they made ready for the show. Clark Col.

now available had little or nothing to say about the show. The only information about the performance comes from a 1913 herald and a four page newspaper courier for Saratoga Springs, July 12. How reliable these are we can only guess but must assume that most if not all the names mentioned were with the show at least at the start of the season.

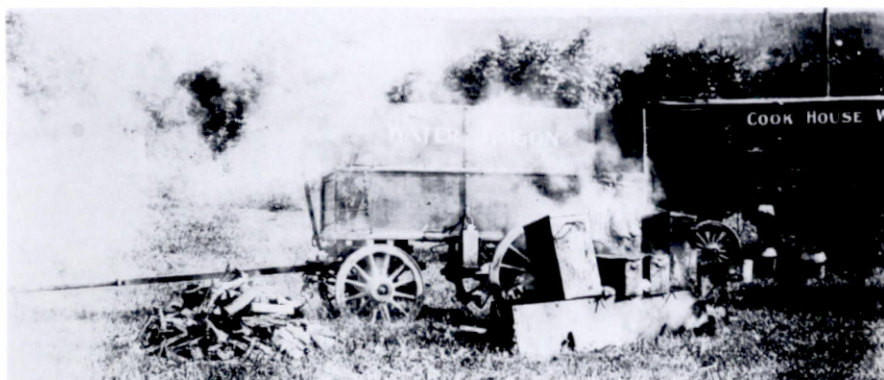
We can lead off with performers or features that may have been in the side show. We know that there were "oriental" dancers for they appear on the side show, bally platform (see photo 11). Prof. Clark presented his colored band and minstrels while the feature was undoubtedly Major Littlefinger and his wife, the world's "Smallest human being living." What other acts appeared in the side show we have no record of. One thing we can be reasonably certain of, though, is that except for Major Littlefinger there were no "freaks" or "human oddities." Shows of this size in this era just could not afford more than one feature of this kind. At best we might find a sword swallower, trained birds, "fire eater," or other acts of this ilk. Frequently a black man dressed up as a African "wild man" and acting accordingly would appear. An act of this kind was probably shown as the last banner on the left on the banner line as shown in

Photo 13—This unloading view shows one of the stock cars on right and wagons coming off the runs on the left. Clark Col.

photo 11 suggests this possibility. Finally, almost certainly the Assistant Manager of the show and inside lecturer would present a "Punch and Judy" show and a magic act.

Although as stated above, we have

Photo 5—Water wagon and cookhouse baggage wagon. In the foreground is the "campfire" on which all boiling of water and cooking of vegetables and soups was done. A small show would not have the flat car space to carry a boiler wagon. Clark Col.



not been able to locate any program for the show, the herald and courier do give us a fairly comprehensive list of performers. From this we can get a pretty good idea of what the performance was like. Prof. John Shelly's Great Military Band furnished music for the show, one of the musicians being Henry Kyes who was later to lead other circus bands. The program was presented by Joseph Bell, Equestrian Director, who also trained and worked White Cloud, the heavily advertised \$25,000 Arabian Stallion. The show also had four large elephants which were probably used in two separate numbers, one a four animal center ring act and the other a singles act in the three rings. While we can only guess at this it was a common practice of shows of this size to spread out their attractions in this way. Other animal acts were Williams Novel Barnyard Circus — probably trained pigs, a popular type of act — and Wedgewood's trained dogs, cats and monkeys.

There were several aerial acts; namely, the Miaco Sisters, Queens of the Air, this a well known circus family name; Gardella Sisters, Human Butterflies, an iron jaw act; Mildred Kelohh, aerialist; and Miss Birdie Martine on her Aerial Rolling Globe. The acrobatic acts consisted of: Shumato Imperial Japanese Troupe, Risley acrobats; The Great Vallier Family, acrobats; Mons. Dechaud, human top;





**Photo 7A—**The parade lining up adjacent to the lot with six of the wagons being visible. This location looks essentially the same today as it did in 1913. Clark Col.

the Powells — another well-known circus name — performing on the tight wire; the famous Earl Family of acrobats; and Reese and Hicks in "the graceful L'Eschette." What this latter act was we can only guess. It might have been an aerial act of some sort. Finally, probably the featured act of the show, was the Orton family of bareback riders. Even the small shows had to have a bareback act. The Ortons no doubt also performed on high school horses.

The comedy in the show was handled in a number of acts. Whether there were any walk-around clown numbers that later shows presented we do not know but certainly the show had its laughs. Joe Pentland, an oldtimer, Rube and Rastus presented comedy mules, almost a standard act in this era. Then there was another all-time favorite, Lucier's Clown Band. The Warners did double duty, as did many of the performers on the show, by doing a comedy tumbling act, as well as presenting a comedy bar number. And last there were Hi Hose, the farmer from Hooppole Township and the Barnells, acrobats with a trick house.

As we go over the foregoing we can see that for such a small show a pretty

well-rounded performance was given to the small town audiences that it played before. The performance was closed by an after show, of course. There was a little wild west consisting of some rope spinning and lassoing and La Cardo's Famous Female Marimba Band. Then as a finale a cage of two lions was pulled into the tent and Bee Florenz entered, petting the animals and otherwise showing her fearlessness. It might be added that this cage was also used as a property wagon. After the evening show the animals were forced into the front half of the wagon and a partition inserted so that the rear part could be loaded with props. A show of this size had to make use of every possible bit of space.

There was another aspect of these small shows that is interesting. They tended to use smaller wagons for a couple of reasons (see photo 12). First, there was no doubling up of department loads (as there would have been if the wagons were larger) so that they could be placed nearer to where they would be needed. And secondly, the smaller wagons were lighter and more easily moved. With their limited horse power this was an important consideration.

The route, which is shown elsewhere, going up the east coast to

**Photo 7B—**Ticket wagon and lead bandwagon on the town square in Newton, N.J., on Thursday July 31, 1913. Clark Col.



**Photo 8—**First clown cart in the parade followed by a small cage with some performers on top. Clark Col.

Canada and return, tells us a number of things about a show of this size. With only a handful of exceptions, the towns visited were mostly in the 5,000-8,000 population range. With one exception, they were all one day stands. That one exception was Winston-Salem where they played two days. The runs between towns were short, for the most part being 50 miles or less. There were only 28 runs of 70 miles or over with only five of those being over 100 miles. Offsetting these longer runs were 9 of 30 miles or less, a number being in the 5-10 mile range. It was evident that one way to keep expenses down was to make short railroad runs. It was the kind of route that the truck shows of later vintage make.

Probably the most interesting aspect of route was a combined overland-railroad jump that the show made in Canada. In Waterloo on Saturday, the next day on Sunday they moved the show overland 10 miles to Granby. This probably was not too difficult. However, the return trip may have caused more problems. It was necessary after the show in Granby, Monday, to move the show overland back to Waterloo, load it on the cars and then move by rail about 40 miles to St. Johns. While nothing is said about this we suspect that Granby had one show in the afternoon or a morning and afternoon show. It could not be expected that the draft stock could make more than one 10 mile trip. It is my guess that local teams were hired to assist the show stock. To my knowledge there is only one other railroad show in the 20th century that tried this and that was the Walter L. Main Circus in the early 1920s.

The show had one other unusual run and that was going into and out of Annapolis where it was necessary to use interurban tracks. However, other shows including the Al G. Barnes Cir-



cus had done this from time to time at various locations.

The season was an unusually long one being just one day short of eight months long. However, the mileage covered as previously noted, was not long, particularly considering the time involved. Total miles covered was 9,255. So far as is known the season was successful financially and as we know the owners, Mugivan and Bowers, went on to become financial leaders in the circus world.

# **SANGER'S GREATER EUROPEAN SHOWS** and **ROBINSON'S FAMOUS SHOWS**

**Season of 1913**  
(# - Sunday no show)

## **March**

29, Montgomery, Ala.; 30, #; 31, Union Springs, Ala., 41 miles, Cen. of Ga.

## **April**

1, Columbus, Ga., 53 miles, Cen. of Ga.; 2, Opelika, Ala., 27 miles Cen. of Ga.; 3, Alesander City, 43 miles, Cen. of Ga.; 4, Sylacauga, 28 miles, Cen. of Ga.; 5, Childersbury, 10 miles, Cen. of Ga.; 6, #; 7, Taladega, Ala, 19 miles, Sou.; 8, Pell City, 51 miles, Sou.; 9, Anniston, 29 miles, Sou.; 10, Rome, Ga., 61 miles, Sou.; 11, Dalton, 40 miles, Sou.; 12, Cartersville, 50 miles, N.C.&St.L.; 13, #; 14, Marietta, Ga., 27 miles, N.C.&St.L.; 15, Winder, 71 miles, S.A.L.; 16, Comer, 38 miles, S.A.L.; 17, Abbeville, So. Car., 50 miles, S.A.L.; 18, Clinton, 43 miles, S.A.L.; 19, Chester, 47 miles, S.A.L.; 20, #; 21, Monroe, No. Car., 44 miles, S.A.L.; 22, Rockingham, 47 miles, S.A.L.; 23, Sanford, 57 miles, S.A.L.; 24, Henderson, 83 miles, S.A.L.; 25, Roanoke Rapids, 45 miles, S.A.L.; 26, Franklin, Va., 46 miles, Sou.; 27, #; 28, Cape Charles, Va., 37 miles, Sou.&Ferry; 29, Crisfield, Md., 98 miles, Pa.; 30, Salisbury, 32 miles, Pa.

**Photo 11—Ticket wagons and side show bally. Note the end banner which proclaims a performing wild man. Clark Col.**



**Photo 9—Second clown cart followed by small tab wagon with wild west performers riding on it, followed by the show's four large elephants.**

## **May**

1, Seaford, Del., 19 miles, Pa.; 2, Cambridge, Md. 33 miles, Pa.; 3, Easton, 33 miles, Pa.-B&E; 4, #; 5, Snow Hil, Md., 73 miles, B&E-Pa.; 6, Georgetown, Del., 42 miles, Pa.; 7, Denton, Md., 86 miles, Pa.; 8, Dover, Del., 43 miles, Pa.; 9, Chestertown, Md. 48 miles, Pa.; 10, Centerville, 46 miles, Pa.; 11, #; 12, Annapolis, Md., 148 miles, Pa.-Interurban; 13, Laurel, 47 miles, Interurban-B&O; 14, Brunswick, 67 miles, B&O; 15, Hancock, 43 miles, B&O; 16, Meyersdale, Pa., 93 miles, B&O; 17, Boswell, 39 miles, B&O; 18, #; 19, Somerset, Pa., 18 miles, B&O; 20, Mt. Pleasant, 69 miles, B&O-Pa.; 21, West Newton, 22 miles, Pa.; 22, Evans City, 74 miles, B&O; 23, Foxburg, 43 miles, B&O; 24, Marienville, 46 miles, B&O; 25, #; 26, Chicora, Pa., 60 miles, B&O; 27, Elwood City, 45 miles, B&O; 28, Girard, Ohio, 35 miles, B&O-Pa.; 29, Painesville, 54 miles, B&O; 30, Elyria, 53 miles, NYC; 31, Clyde, 50 miles, NYC-Big Four

## **June**

1, #; 2, Windsor, Ont., 108 miles, NYC; 3, Amhertsburg, 17 miles, Can. Nat.; 4, Leamington, 36 miles, Can. Nat.; 5, Ridgetwon, 47 miles, Can. Nat.; 6,

Hagerville, 90 miles, Can. Nat.; 7, Oakville, 41 miles, Can. Nat.; 8, #; 9, Oshawa, Ont. 53 miles, Can. Nat.; 10, Port Hope, 35 miles, Can. Nat.; 11, Campbellford, 72 miles, Can. Nat.; 12, Napanee, 73 miles, Can. Nat.; 13, Trenton, 36 miles, Can. Nat.; 14, Picton, 37 miles, Can. Nat.; 15, #; 16, Bancroft, Ont., 85 miles, Can. Nat.; 17, Tweed, 79 miles, Can. Nat.; 18, Perth, 74 miles, Can. Nat.; 19, Kemptville, 38 miles, Can. Nat.; 20, Almonte, 54 miles, Can. Nat.; 21, Armprior, 15 miles, Can. Nat.; 22, #; 23, Pembroke, Ont., 50 miles, Can. Nat.; 24, Renfrew, 33 miles, Can. Nat.; 25, Alexandria, 108 miles, Can. Nat.; 26, Hawkesbury, 35 miles, Can. Nat.; 27, Lachine, Que., 85 miles, Can. Nat.; 28, Richmond, 89 miles, Can. Nat.; 29, #; 30, Coaticooke, Que., 52 miles, Can. Nat.

## **July**

1, Lennoxville, 17 miles, Can. Nat.; 2, Thetford Mines, 67 miles, Can. Nat.; 3, Beauceville, 50 miles, Can. Nat.; 4, Megantic, 88 miles, Can. Nat.; 5, Waterloo, 107 miles, Can. Nat.; 6, #; 7, Granby, Que., 10 miles, By wagon

**Photo 12—Joseph Bell, Equestrian Director, shaving outside his baggage wagon dressing room. This wagon, only about eleven feet long, was typical of the short wagons used on the smaller shows, not being too heavy when loaded and easier to handle on muddy lots with the limited horse power of these shows. Clark Col.**







Photo 10—Tab wagon carrying wild west performers, with the show's elephants and just at the edge of the picture the steam calliope. Clark Col.

overland; 8, St. Johns, (10 miles by wagon overland, 40 miles, Can. Nat.); 9, Plattsburg, N.Y., 47 miles, Can. Nat.-D.&H.; 10, Port Henry, 49 miles, D.&H.; 11, Whitehall, 37 miles, D.&H.; 12, Saratoga Springs, 37 miles, D.&H.; 13, #; 14, Cobleskill, N.Y., 85 miles, D.&H.; 15, Cooperstown, 47 miles, D.&H.; 16, Oneonta, 21 miles, D.&H.; 17, Sidney, 22 miles, D.&H.; 18, Walton, 21 miles, N.Y.O.&W.; 19, Liberty, 59 miles, N.Y.O.&W.; 20, #; 21, Ellenville, N.Y., 39 miles, N.Y.O.&W.; 22, Port Jervis, 32 miles, N.Y.O.&W.; 23, Passaic, N.J., 74 miles, Erie; 24, Hackensack, 11 miles, Erie; 25, Englewood, 28 miles, Erie; 26, Montclair, 27 miles, Erie, 27, #; 28, Morristown, N.J. 22 miles, Erie-M.&E.; 29, Boonton, 11 miles, D.L.&W.; 30, Dover, 10 miles, D.L.&W.; 31, Newton, 22 miles, D.L.&W.

#### August

1, Washington, 33 miles, B.L.&W.; 2, Bangor, Pa., 32 miles, D.L.&W.-L.&H.R.; 3, #; 4, Stroudsburg, Pa., 10 miles, L.&H.R.-D.L.&W.; 5, West Nantcoke, 56 miles, D.L.&W.; 6, Berwick, 23 miles, D.L.&W.; 7, Danville, 24 miles, D.L.&W.; 8, Mahanoy City, 48 miles, Reading; 9, Hazelton, 21 miles, Read.-L.V.; 10, #; 11, Freeland, Pa., 9 miles, L.V.; 12, Slatington, 32 miles, L.V.; 13, Lansford, 23 miles, Reading; 14, Tamaqua, 5 miles, Reading; 15, Tremont, 28 miles, Reading; 16, Middleton, 53 miles, Read.-Pa.; 17, #; 18, Gettysburg, Pa., 55 miles, Pa.-Read.; 19, Shippensburg, 45 miles, Reading; 20, Waynesboro, 26 miles, Pa.-W.M.D.; 21, Martinsburg, W.Va., 38 miles, W.M.D.-Pa.; 22, Winchester, Va., 22 miles, Pa.-B.&O.; 23, Woodstock, 31 miles, B.&O.; 24, #; 25, Harrisonburg, Va., 38 miles, B.&O.; 26, Staunton, 26 miles, B.&O.; 27, Charlottesville, 37 miles, C.&O.; 28, Louisa, 21 miles, C.&O.; 29, Williamsburg, 119 miles, C.&O.; 30, Hampton, 34 miles, C.&O.; 31, #

#### September

1, South Richmond, Va., 82 miles, A.C.L.; 2, Emporia, 63 miles, A.C.L.; 3, Lawrenceville, 21 miles, Sou.; 4, South Hill, 20 miles, Sou.; 5, Chase City, 42 miles, Sou.; 6, Oxford, N.C., 38 miles,

#### October

1, Elberton, 31 miles, Sou.; 2, Royston, 20 miles, Sou.; 3, Toccoa, 30 miles, Sou.; 4, Commerce, 46 miles, Sou.; 5, #, Over this weekend the name of the show was changed to Robinson's Famous Shows, but without any change in cars or so far as we know the personnel; 6, Gainesville, Ga., 33 miles, Sou.; 7, Buford, 16 miles, Sou.; 8, Fayetteville, 59 miles, Sou.; 9, Griffin, 21 miles, Sou.; 10, Jackson, 37 miles, Sou.; 11, Woodbury, 21 miles, Sou.; 12, #; 13, Americus, Ga., 91, A.B.&C.-Cen. of Ga.; 14, Dawson, 26 miles, Cen. of Ga.; 15, Richland, 27 miles, S.A.L.; 16, Cuthbert, 28 miles, S.A.L.; 17, Arlington, 26 miles, S.A.L.; 18, Dothan, Ala., 47 miles, Ga. Cen.; 19, #; 20, Sampson, Ala., 50 miles, Ga. Cen.; 21, Florala, 20 miles, Ga. Cen.; 22, Hartford, 48 miles, Ga. Cen.; 23, Blakely, Ga., 56 miles, Ga. Cen.; 24, Albany, 48 miles, Ga. Cen.; 25, Abbeville, 65 miles, G.S.W.&G.-S.A.L.; 26, #; 27, Ocilla, Ga., 31 miles, S.A.L.; 28, Helena, 56 miles, S.A.L.; 29, Lyons, 39 miles, S.A.L.; 30, Claxton, Ga., 26 miles, S.A.L.; 31, Fairfax, S.C., 111 miles, S.A.L.

#### November

1, North, 38 miles, S.A.L.; 2, #; 3, McBee, S.C., 98 miles, S.A.L.; 4, Hamlet, N.C., 46 miles, S.A.L.; 5, Dillon, S.C., 40 miles, S.A.L.; 6, Lake City, 54 miles, A.C.L.; 7, Florence, 23 miles, A.C.L.; 8, Bishopville, 38 miles, S.A.L.; 9, #; 10, Manning, S.C., 40 miles, S.A.L.-A.C.L.; 11, Charleston, 75 miles, A.C.L.; 12, Summerville, 22 miles, Sou.; 13, St. George, 26 miles, Sou.; 14, Bamberg, 28 miles, Sou.; 15, Aiken, 45 miles, Sou.; 16, #; 17, Johnston, S.C., 25 miles, Sou.; 18, Prosperity, 40 miles, Sou.; 19, Greenwood, 37 miles, Sou.; 20, Athens, Ga., 81 miles, S.A.L.; 21, Lawrenceville, 39 miles, S.A.L.; 22, Fairburn, 53 miles, S.A.L.-A.&W.P.; 23, #; 24, Hogansville, Ga., 39 miles, A.&W.P.; 25, West Point, 29 miles, A.&W.P.; 26, Notasulga, Ala., 46 miles, W. OF A.; 27, Tallassee, 22 miles, W. OF A.-B.&S.E.

Closes - home run to Montgomery-34 miles on B.&S.E.-W. of A.

Photo 14—No photos of the Sanger 1913 steam calliope have been located. However this calliope, known as the Howes Great London, was listed as having been on the Sanger show in 1913 by Richard E. Conover in his pictorial encyclopedia of circus parade wagons that appeared in the Nov.-Dec. 1969 issue of the *BANDWAGON*. This photo was taken on the Howes Great London 1920 show. The wagon was short and it would have matched other small wagons on the Sanger show. Pfening Col.





# TWO YEARS UNDER THE BIG TOP

By Bert D. Alton

By winter of 1915 there seemed definite need in our family for the eldest to leave school and become an earner. Being the firstborn, it therefore devolved upon the writer to attempt this transition, though the marketable skills of an eighteen-year-old may be limited; and mine were thin and doubtful indeed!

However, an application directed to one Ed A. Woeckener bandmaster with the Al G. Barnes Wild Animal Circus (at their winter quarters in Venice, California, where it was making ready for the on-coming road season) stressed some supposed ability with certain musical instruments and a desire to join the troupe as a bandsman.

To my delight I received in reply an invitation to appear at the Venice winter quarters and try out! I therefore made a singing voyage south from Frisco to L. A. on the steamer YALE (Cost me \$15.00) presenting myself most promptly and eagerly in reply. My delight, I recall, was short-lived; for my inability to keep up with this fast-stepping and experienced bunch of professionals soon became painfully evident. The director indicated that if I switched to "peck horn" (alto) an instrument emphasizing hopefully harmonious afterbeats, and would faithfully resort to "woodshedding" the proposed musical scores for a couple of weeks prior to opening date, I might hopefully be considered a member of the troupe. So to this program I zealously applied myself.

Our opening exhibition in that year of 1915 was given in Oxnard, California; and although bills were up around town and the public was invited at usual admission fees, I believe as many job applicants attended this first performance as did paid admissions. Certainly when the route cards were passed to personnel, they listed the following Friday and Saturday in Los Angeles as opening days and dates, and our dubious performance in Oxnard as a dress rehearsal!

An inviolate rule of our management as to days and dates of performance was "never on Sunday" — and I have a dreary memory of that first Sunday on the road as being one of lonely desolation. It was spent in Lancaster, California, which was in 1915 little more than a small R.R. junction and just over the hill from L.A., — and on the desert!

However, when doors opened that Monday afternoon, we played to a good



Al G. Barnes (George Stonehouse) is pictured on the right, his wife, Mrs. Dolly Barnes is standing. On the left is Barnes brother Albert T. Stonehouse, who used the name Capt. Stonewall when presenting his seal act. Albert Stonehouse was the author's grandfather. All photos are from the author's collection.

and profitable house and an even better one that evening.

I have often heard it said that the ability to pick 'tanks' (small railroad towns with gate potential) that were being overlooked by other big R.R. shows, and turning them into areas of great potential, was one of Al G.'s main success attributes. A sort of "git there fustest with the mostest" principle. He well knew that the arrival about dawn of our sparkling train of 25 or 28 cars in red, blue and glistening gold leaf splendor would stir comment at every breakfast table that the news reached, in a town of ten to twenty thousand, and would cause a stir of excitement in a metropolis of any size.

Often, an unbelievable number of small-town people of all ages and classes would wait at the R.R. yards or "runs" for a first glimpse of the circus as it arrived. First behind the engine

came the "flats" on which were chocked the animal cages with their precious cargo. They were spotted immediately and nearest the lot for early and safe delivery there. Then as near as possible were set the stock cars containing our faithful draft animals — horses, of course, and "bulls", as the elephants were called, and without which patient and powerful sloggers we would have been unable to move our heavy equipment either onto or off many lots, especially in wet or heavy weather. We had, in addition, of course, our steam-driven trucks and power motor driven vehicles, but it was surprising how many places we got into where they were not only useless but had themselves to be extricated by those faithful and powerful bulls.

Then at a near-by available siding were set the "prop" cars containing such physical properties as the "big top" and other canvas. One car I remember was devoted to the cook shack — tent, tables and ware, ranges, refrigerators, etc. It was directed and provisioned by one Charley Davis, who developed a reputation as the best steward, running the greatest cook shack on the road.

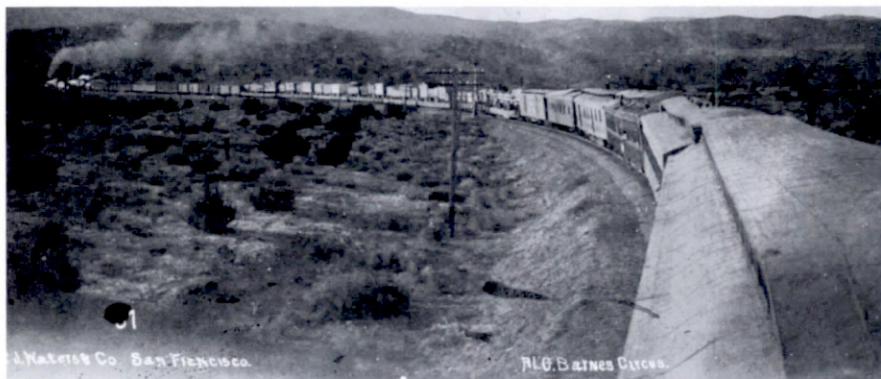
Several cars were devoted to the transport of our sea of canvas which included, besides the "Big Top", the menagerie tent, the "pad" room (or dressing tent) where we daily found our trunks and water pails lined up in prescribed order and with canvas partition between men's and women's premises, the smaller sideshow tents, six to ten of these fronting the midway on either side.

The "office" where the money and records were kept was a staunch wagon spotted in the front area where full view might be had of midway and front gate!

Then there were the various coaches for human cargo, the band car, the chicken band car (We had a girls' band for parade and sideshow purposes.), the performers' car, the married folks' car and, somewhere farther forward (hopefully) the "Crum" cars — those inhabited by the canvasmen and other property laborers but named for the parasitic vermin too often present which were referred to lightly as "crums", and which were almost constantly under fumigation.

Near the rear was the one common meeting place aboard train, known as the privilege car, where one might





repair on the long or short hauls and while away some hours with games such as blackjack, keno, and stud. Coffee was always on the range. It, and a limited assortment of pastries might be had in exchange for our "dookies". These were small coupon books issued by the management and available here and at the box office through the simple procedure of drawing them as an advance against future salary. They could be used at the gaming tables also. The privilege car was a place of common meeting and very generally resorted to by those above the labor eschelon.

Last, but certainly not least in importance, came "Al G's" private car which he rode in stately elegance when en route. It consisted, as I remember, of two commodious living apartments to accommodate two, four, or six persons each, a dining area with kitchen and pantry, and an impressive observation platform at the rear. One of these compartments was occupied by Cap't Albert and Theresa (Stonewall) Stonehouse, Al G's brother and sister-in-law. They were the writer's maternal grandparents, she, functioning as treasurer and he, a dean of sea lion trainers.

In the performers' car travelled such luminaries as Louie Roth, lion trainer; Mabel Stark, tigers; Martha Florine, leopards; Bill Tafe, dean of clowns; Boogie Red, wild west; as well as Fred Fulton, "The Pale Plasterer from

**The Al G. Barnes Circus train rounding a curve near San Francisco, Ca., around 1915.**

Minneapolis" — the then world's heavyweight boxing "champ."

We proceeded northward aboard this city on wheels through the San Joaquin valley in a successful sweep of the "tanks" to wind up with a Saturday showing in the rather rough little state capitol of Sacramento, and to face a long weekend jump over the Donner Pass. The disappointment was general at our early Sunday departure from Sacramento, but for disparate reasons. As a "First of May" my regret was mellowed by keen anticipation of the trip in broad daylight over the legendary Donner Pass. It became apparent that for the "old troupers" regret was predominately at leaving the famous bars and bistros of Sac'to for a weekend train ride — and the privilege car!

We played to good houses in Reno and Carson City, Nevada, and when we pulled into Fallon we had no reason to believe that any but our usual good fortune awaited. However, adjacent to this town was a quite populous Indian reservation (Blackfoot, I was told) and it appeared to us that morning as we left the "runs" on our trek to the lot where we were to "put up" and per-

**The sideshow band is pictured on cage No. 29 in a Barnes parade in Newport, Wash., July 16, 1915.**



form, that the town had been taken over by the Indian population.

We were told by the "towners" that the Indians had learned of our date for local showing (our bill boards were all over town) but that they were taking no chance on our slipping into town and away prematurely. They had been arriving for a week and had the town surrounded with their campsites and wagons. And sure enough they formed an early line at the box office, storming in at the instant of opening and filling "blues" and reserved seats to near capacity. By show time they outnumbered the whites five-to-one. We had a full house with a large crowd of both segments still waiting at the front gate. Word was passed up to the stand that we would "railroad", that is, shorten each act by half in order to accomplish a second matinee and accommodate the waiting populace outside.

We in the bandstand who were sharply put to it to follow musically the abbreviated acts became aware of an atmosphere of tension and change and were bothered by a rising gusty wind disturbing our music folios. My rack was tipped into my lap and while I struggled to save my score the bandsman in the next chair leaned over and rasped in my ear, "Look, the Indians are all leaving!" And so they were. The same people who had fought so hard to be first-seated were now, as with one accord, making for the exits. I'll not say that all the white citizenry remained seated, but I saw none leave.

Meanwhile, the aerial lion act was in progress and Leo (remember him as the symbol of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer?) had reached the zenith of his ride to the top of the tent and was showing all the symptoms of a nervous cat quite out of his element and wanting more than anything else "down." The worried property men were struggling with block and tackle to accommodate him. As I gazed aloft fascinated, the "big top" ballooned skyward and we could hear stakes popping out and guy lines straining under the stress of effort to hold down this landlocked dirigible of canvas. When the nearest center pole lifted and crashed upon the steel arena, director Woeckener jumped from his stand shouting, "Blowdown! Under the bear cages, men! Head for the cages!"

It was merely a matter of steps to gain this refuge since the bandstand backed up against the cages. And animal cages have nearly the same strength and stability of small flatcars, and beneath them was probably as safe a place as one might find in a blowdown, or even a tornado.

At this point the big top was a dusty maelstrom of threshing tent poles, stakes and collapsing seat sections. Spectators dashed in all directions and one bewildered townswoman ran



screaming to and fro along our cage line of refuge until one bandsman pulled her under his cage beside himself.

The wind subsided as suddenly as it arose, leaving us to our lone and tattered misery and effectively concluding our only attempt to perform in Fallon, though some of the locals were eager to have us try. Actually, there was too much damage to the "top" for the purpose, and though much was lost in the way of props and costumes, some was found snagged in trees in a grove two miles across the prairie. Thanks to the Indians the loss was all material and practically none personal. We were again fortunate, though not for long.

It was axiomatic around the lot, that "time, tide and circus wait for no man" and we were billed to open on Monday of the following week in Susanville, a new and remote town back across the state line in California's north interior, and as yet untried by the major R.R. shows because of inaccessibility. Again we would utilize the weekend for a long hard pull up a new road into a primitive, high area set between two immense lakes, and I believe the company was unanimous in anticipation of a venture into this virgin territory.

However, as our heavy train labored upgrade over this line of recent construction, the rails spread and the engine and first two flats were grounded. We found ourselves marooned for the day on a desert of desolation worse than Lancaster.

It was late that night before the wrecker succeeded in setting us back on trackage and we found ourselves heading sadly back to California's chain of coastal cities.

It was about this time that opportunity knocked, though faintly, at the door of the narrator. Becoming increasingly bored with the drudgery of that everlasting peck-horn I'd had thrown at me, I provided myself with a



**Jerry Barnes (Stonehouse) a half brother of Al G. and Albert Stonehouse is shown astride a horse in a Barnes parade around 1916.**

pair of drumsticks and began surreptitiously practicing rolls, flams and beats when alone, and when any suitable surface was available.

Our bandmaster Woeckener, a trooper of the old school, had a faculty of knowing how to gather about him the type of rough and ready musician who could "cut" the music in true circus fashion, and who were always "with it". In his words, "You gotta show up on time and sober for every performance. Miss one and you're docked; miss two and you're through! Show up drunk once and you've had it!"

I observed only two instances of

**The big show band wagon ready to leave the lot of the Al G. Barnes Circus around 1913. The big open wagon behind the pony wagon on the right is a pit show at the front of the midway.**

violation of the sobriety rule. The first affected my own career and remains indelibly inscribed on my memory. Our snare drummer, Charley Roberts, was a performer of nearly flawless perfection and exquisite technique. He never missed a cue. His rolls were feathery lace and I used to observe him in covert fascination. It seemed he rarely had need of his score except in concert work, and there he was immense and always precise.

But he was bored! And he was sober; neither condition to his liking. So when we doubled back for Auburn — next stand — he left the train in Sacramento and had a private celebration to make up for the one he felt he'd previously missed. That afternoon in Auburn we were without a snare in the pre-show concert, in the matinee, and in the evening street ballyhoo as well. We really missed old Charley in the grand entry, but when we turned into the stand for the evening's grind, there he was in his usual place, trying to appear unconcerned and as if he'd been with it through the whole day.







The pull away team is pictured at the runs of the Barnes show around 1915.

Avoiding the director's outraged glares he essayed the program as if nothing had happened. But that was not the way he sounded. He had not allowed enough time for sobering and his beats were imprecise, his roll had lost its magic and he missed cues. He seemed sometimes unsure as to what score was up.

After twenty minutes of this, Woekener turned at a pause, and pointing his wand at the drunk he said, "If you think that you can find your way out to the office you can go now and draw your time. Then get your props, because you won't be aboard the train tonight." Charley faded. But as we continued, the program developed a limp. Without Chuck's feathery roll every musical hold and chord seemed thin and weak, and we began to get reproachful stares from the performers. At mid-show pause Ed turned to the group and asked hopefully, "Is there anyone who can hit that snare?" No one volunteered, so I raised my hand.

Woekener regarded me with dubious surprise. "You, drum?" he asked. I said I'd try, and with a look of doubtful apprehension he waved me to the drummer's chair. It may have been luck, and I admit to some faking, but actually I had been a close observer of old Charley for some time and I fell quite naturally into the routine.

Now with some inner satisfaction I observed the director's surprise at my ability to make the cues and follow the score. But my test was coming up — the monkey slide.

At this point there was a suspension of other ring activities. A simian climbed a center pole opposite the reserves, and gaining the top, he grasped a pulley suspended on a cable slanting to the ground at the far end of the tent. Jumping off he slid down nearly the full length of the big top, gathering momentum as he went and disengaging himself with the ease of a

practiced trainman just before he hit the ground anchor.

This feat was always accompanied by a thin drum roll at the top which gathered volume and crescendo as the speed increased and with a crash of cymbals at the bottom. I had long been intrigued with this effect and I did my best to imitate it. And I was rewarded when Woekener turned and looked at me saying, "OK! You're the drummer!"

Trouping life now began to acquire a rosier hue, and for me the matter of going to bed in one town and waking up in another each morning was of intriguing interest. We learned that we were again essaying a new and untried area. The bustling and sizable city of Eureka had until this time depended entirely on its fine port and good highways for outside communication and had therefore never hosted a railroad show. Recently there had been an extension of the coastline railroad in, and we were to have the opening date in this virgin spot, and it turned out to be a most memorable occasion from start to finish.

Immediately upon pulling into the yard in the dawn we were awakened by the tumult in the streets. Peering out the car windows we found we were surrounded. These people, many of whom had lived in the area all their lives, and without benefit of travel, had knowledge only of their local animals, domestic and wild. Lions, tigers, elephants, camels, zebras and giraffes were creatures of which they had only read and heard. And no less intrigued were they at sight of the flashy train. It soon became apparent we were to be boarded; they had never seen show people either!

They came aboard our sleepers and down the aisles, thrusting aside our drapes and peering into bunks and berths and apartments with open mouths. To them we were all on display.

Although we arrived at dawn the streets were already lined from the runs to the lot where the crew was having real difficulty "putting up"



Albert Stonehouse with one of his sea lions presented on the Al G. Barnes Circus.

because of the press of townspeople. And no sooner was canvas up than clamor arose at the front gate for admission!

Circus before breakfast? A short conference was held and it was decided that we would railroad our breakfast, give a short parade, get the doors open before noon and give an early show for the benefit of the eager beavers in addition to the programmed matinee and evening show.

I still can't see why we bothered with a parade, for when we returned we could hardly find room to spot the wagons for the crowd. We lunched on the run and threw doors open. Immediately we were filled to capacity. So we railroaded and had doors open for an early full capacity matinee. There were always more waiting than we could accommodate, so we crowded in a third performance that afternoon. We opened for an early night performance and a second, so that it was near midnight when we wrapped it up, having given five complete performances. Still people were waiting who had to make do with sideshows.

Five "turn-aways" in one day. If this is not a record, it must be close. And to management this represented nearly a week of good gates without the moving costs. Did we all get a bonus? No.

Our course was now fixed in a northerly direction playing most of the towns of the Pacific northwest, including those on the Puget Sound. It was in one of these perched in the hills at the edge of the water with streets slanting steeply seaward that we had a problem keeping our parade rigs from launching themselves into the sea.

Our number one bandwagon was one of the heaviest rigs on the lot, and the tallest, an impressive sight moving grandly down a street behind its eight-horse team of noble draft animals. And the skinner was an expert, a matter of constant comfort to us bandmen



perched atop this swaying leviathan.

Today, however, he was disturbed because his helper was absent — the man on whom he depended for braking power and extra beef on pull-ups, etc.

This town was built in a narrow crescent among the hills reaching in to the Sound. Our skinner did a perfect job with those sixteen reins — eight in hand, and providing his own braking power besides . . . until we came to the last turn at the top of a grade looking straight down into the Sound with a sharp turn at the bottom.

Our driver pulled up while we all peered down that awesome reach and he turned to us. "Fellows," said he, "this is the one I've been dreading. This is a steep pitch and that's a sharp turn down at the bottom. If we get to going too fast for the turn we're going right out there into the drink." A pause. Then: "Guess I don't need to remind you, if we make the turn, everybody to the port side so we don't turn it over."

With that he gently eased down the grade while we clung to our lofty perches in terror. One of our fellows added his weight to the brake, with the driver's. The powerful wheel horses dug in, braced their shoulders and did their best to hold; but it was too much weight. The grade was too steep and we were gaining velocity at an alarming rate when the mounted parade marshal and his assistant saw our predicament. He came charging in to grasp bridles of lead horses on either side; and with this combined effort we were able to cut and negotiate the sharp turn at the bottom — and stay upright and on dry land.

We now made our way across the reaches of the cascades into north central Washington and Idaho, proceeding south through the latter state until we found ourselves in the quaint, small town of Payette. Here we put up at the edge of town. An outlying residence adjoined our lot and it turned out to be the home of a young man, a recent high school graduate with a trombone and a wanderlust. He watched the put-up from start to completion, saw the parade line up and pull away to town where he listened from various vantage points. What he saw and heard intrigued him and he approached our director with a request to join the troupe.

Woekener made some local inquiry, and he confided to the group now that he was impressed with a new applicant whose local referral had replied to inquiry, "Who, Paul Maule? The best trombone player in the state of Idaho!" He was to sit in with us that afternoon and evening, which he did, and showed up some of our skeptical old troupers. All sight-reading yet! He was hired and aboard the train when we pulled out of Payette that night.

So that is how Paul David Maule joined the trick. We now had a new

"first-of-May". He was promptly dubbed "Pall Mall". He and I soon became close chums. We invested what spare time was allowed us an investigation of local and historic sites wherever we went. We swam in every available lake or stream, icy or warm; if there was anything for which a region was famous we did our best with what time we had to investigate, an interest which soon earned us the ultimate degradation of being referred to as "tourists". Paul Maule and I enjoyed our association for the rest of the season and on through 1916. After I left at the end of 1916 he joined the big one, Barnum and Bailey.



**Eddie Woekener and his twenty-two piece band posed for this photo in front of the Al G. Barnes Circus marquee in 1913. Woekener was band master on the Barnes show for many years.**

When the first World War engulfed us he joined the Navy as bandsman and being stationed at Mare Island he was a regular visitor at our home in Oakland. He left the road to become a lumberman in his old home of Payette where Thetis and I visited him in 1966 with our granddaughter Linda, and were entertained at his mountain lake cabin. Hopefully he still holds forth — with his faithful sliphorn — and still plays with the Shrine Band.

We now headed north through western and middle western states on an easterly course that took us as far as New York. It was about this time that the equestrian director, King, approached me with an inquiry as to my riding ability saying he had a spot for me in the "manage" act.

"You do ride?" a gentle inflection in his voice.

"Oh, sure." And I told him of my farm upbringing. I had ridden everything on the ranch.

But he was definitely unimpressed. "That's all right," said he reassuring-

ly, "I can make a rider of you in an hour's time."

As I recollect, this proved to be a somewhat overoptimistic assessment; but he was a thorough horseman and a good teacher. The basics I learned from him stayed with me through life.

When he introduced me to my mount it turned out to be a young silver-colored gelding of good conformation and somewhat more than his share of spunk and spirited mischief. These characteristics King explained to me while Silver and I listened attentively — though sneeringly on Silver's part. Then King mounted and demonstrated the cues used to put the animal through

his routine and it was amazing the cooperation he got from that patently unwilling cayuse, and the impressively beautiful action accomplished!

"Now," said King, turning him to face the reserves, "This is where he stars. He does the best 'kooch' of anything on the lot, including the girls in the sideshow tent. There are five dancing horses in the line and he has the center, and deserves it, when he's working right. Watch closely." King uttered a coo of encouragement and began raking the horse gently from shoulder to thigh with alternate heels at the same time tickling his rump with his quirt on first one side and then the other. Then that little animal, after a protesting snort or two, placed his front hoofs solidly together, at the same time lifting his rear feet alternately and daintily causing his whole haunch and buttocks to swing and sway in extraordinary undulations. King kept him on this routine for over two minutes before pulling him up with a bow, and rewarding him with a grateful and affectionate pat.

"When he's working like that" said he appreciatively, "believe me, the seats go crazy." Then dismounting, "OK, he's all yours. Make him work." How simple. I'll not go into the hours



that Silver and I spent together to achieve this entente. Suffice to say that we managed in every phase but his dance. That dance he purely hated. It ill became his equine dignity to do this mincing step. I took to cueing him early. He would snort and shake his head in protest, but when he finally broke into his routine we could always be sure of an appreciative hand from the audience. But each day he stalled longer and more obstinately until the day came that we had to exit without his dance! King met us at the padroom door.

"Well, he finally blew it," he said. "I'll have him saddled at four-thirty and you two can woodshed it between shows." So Silver and I found ourselves alone that afternoon under the deserted big top, but at our usual spot for his hippodrome dance — which he simply refused to do. For forty-five minutes I cued him and coaxed him, whipped him and raked him until he stood in a puddle of his own lather before he finally came around and broke into his usual dance routine. Then I took him to his stall for his rations and rest (R&R).

When he had left the car, which he did at once, the conductor informed me that this character caught and boarded every car he was able to as it crossed the bridge, and disembarked only when he had accomplished his purpose of lifting someone's wallet and that he, (the conductor) had made it a rule to announce the matter each time just as he would the next stop or street. A few wallets had even been recovered thereby.

Fellow passengers said they had observed him pass something on to another just as I intercepted him; and I never saw my wallet again. It has always been a matter of chagrin to me to have been thus victimized within minutes of my first departure from my native heath. And though I returned across to the U.S.A. that day a chastened chap, it would be wrong to say I was broke. I still had a hatful of Mexican specie, with which I consoled myself and sent home to family and friends as souvenirs stuffed in letters written on my pad room trunk 'tween shows.

Only a few days now remained of the current season of parades, performances and of Grand Entries around the hippodrome. It seems appropriate here to mention the strident vehicle which always imposed itself at the end of every such spectacle, the steam calliope, and to speak of its gentle operator whom we'll call Mrs. Smith. A quiet, unassuming and meek little lady, she seemed an unlikely candidate for her job, but she performed it in masterful fashion. She could coax sounds from this brazen behemoth which passed as music — at a suitable distance. She stuffed cotton in her own ears.



Al G. Barnes at the rear of his private car on the circus train.

Mrs. Smith had two consuming interests to console her. She loved to "crosh-uh" (crochet), and she idolized her arrogant pip-squeak spouse. Early in the season she essayed a serious project, the creation with her crochet hook, of a king-sized bedspread of many colors and of intricate design. She spent most of her leisure hours thus occupied. Her industry became a matter of gossip and of prideful interest to her fellow troopers who laid bets as to the work's date of completion. Her husband, on whom she seemed to dote, was a large-mouthed braggart, a sort of Jack-of-all trades, a roust-about who couldn't fit in and whose very presence aboard the train and around the lot was endured in sufferance to her.

Because of a tall tale he would eagerly spin to any with patience to listen, he had earned the dubious sobriquet of "The Great Unchokeable." Weasly and wiry rooster that he was, he bragged of having once met the great Frank Gotch, a former world's wrestling champ, on equal terms, and to the latter's discomfort.

This Gotch had, in the memory of older sports fans, stumped the country taking on all challengers and would wind up his exhibitions by sitting on the floor in a corner of the ring while the announcer offered a bag of gold to any person, "man, woman or child" who would step into the ring and succeed with his bare hands in throttling the supine and unresisting gladiator. As no record exists of the Great Gotch ever having parted with a dollar as the result of this challenge,

the average inexperienced listener would, at this point, blurt as I did, "And are you telling me that you succeeded?"

"Hell, no," he'd answer, disdainfully. "Couldn't nobody choke that ox. He knew the trick, — but I do, too. So I just challenged him right back, — winner take all! An y' know, that feller just worked himself to a frazzle before he give in. And I walked away with the swag." If his listener's face then betrayed some doubt or disbelief at this conclusion he would tense his neck muscles 'til the cords stood out like fiddle strings, by way of demonstration of his technique, holding his breath 'til he was as red as a lobster, and the average listener would yield the point in apprehension.

One of this non-pareil's first duties of the morning was to stoke the calliope's firebox and develop a head of steam for the parade. On one sad morning near season's end his patient and industrious wife sat at her console awaiting his tardy effort to get up pressure. She had brought her crocheting with her. It was a bulky bundle and nearly finished; but, with little time remaining, she had resolved to complete her project before season's end. She now tenderly unfolded her work hoping to accomplish a few stitches while waiting.

This calm acceptance of a sticky situation seemed to infuriate her tardy and irascible spouse. He reached into the cab, gathering her bulky bundle in his arms and heaved it into the firebox. When her fellow troopers learned of this monstrous vandalism, talk was had of lynching. Out of consideration for her he was allowed to live.

We played many picturesque and interesting towns along the Mississippi before we again pointed west for the coast, then trending north through the Imperial Valley, through the Pass and Beaumont and Banning, we played San Bernardino in southern California. Thus I had my first view of the fair valley, which would sometime be our home and later assume so large a part in the lives of all the family.

As we now approached the season's end we found ourselves in the San Francisco bay area and a part of each day's delight was to greet old friends and family. One day on parade in Richmond, I espied from my perch on the band wagon a familiar group of eager youngsters, including my sister, Bee, and a young lady I had known and admired through my Oakland school days. When we returned to the lot, sister Bee, her chum, Thetis, and my closest boyhood chum, Emil Schaegele, were there waiting. We had a great visit and laid plans to attend the "Fair" together (Panama Pacific International Exposition) in San Francisco the next weekend.



Martha Florine, who presented a leopard act, is shown in the cookhouse of the Al G. Barnes Circus.

After seeing them seated in the reserves I returned to the front gate to perceive another acquaintance in the person of Thetis' uncle, Miles Standish. He was in an apprehensive and somewhat militant mood, having heard that his favorite niece had gone to the lot to meet some guy with the circus. I believe he was reassured only when he found her to be seated with her group enjoying the show. He and I later became great friends and often laughed about his 'Richmond Rescue'.

Early on the following Sunday our little foursome boarded the Key Route Ferry from Oakland. We crossed the bay in the bright morning hours and did not return until the ensuing wee ones. We had spent the day at the Fair.



We had heard Sousa's band. And Thetis had tried to spend some weird foreign money which had been sent to her from El Paso.

As I returned to the lot on Monday I


could hear the throaty tones of Smith's calliope; and on the midway, candy-butcher Charley Hotts' famous pitch, "No peanuts - no sur-kiss! No peanuts - no sur-kiss!"

## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS

### The Mighty Cavalcade is Coming. Season 1898.

FIVE TIMES MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND GORGEQUE  
THAN ANY PREVIOUS YEAR.


10th Triumphant Tour of the Giant Attraction,




# WELSH BROS.

## NEWEST GREAT R.R. SHOWS

JOHN WELSH  
AND  
M. H. WELSH,  
Equal Owners and  
Directors.





POSITIVELY  
THE MOST  
COMPLETE  
POPULAR  
PRICED TENTED  
EXPOSITION IN  
CHRISTENDOM  
PERMANENT ADDRESS & WINTER  
HEADQUARTERS AT LANCASTER, PA.

The Welsh Bros. Circus operated out of Lancaster, Pa., from 1892 through 1904. This letterhead was used by the show in 1898. The title and lot scene are printed in green, as is line at the top. The "10th Triumphant Tour" is in red. The cuts of John and M. H. Welsh are in gold. The Welsh show traveled on 20 cars in 1898.



# The Origin of Early Circus Calliope Instruments

by Frederick Dahlinger, Jr.

In 1872 an enterprising individual associated with the launching of the Great Eastern Circus at Cincinnati had the idea to mount a steam calliope instrument in a wagon and use its attention drawing loudness to announce the fact the show was in town. The application was so successful it was followed by the Barnum and Van Amburgh shows in 1873 and the Cole, Cooper & Bailey and Sells circuses in 1874. By the mid 1880's most large circuses had a calliope, and the steam music maker had become symbolic of the American circus presence.

The origin of the instruments which were used by the circuses of the 1870's and 1880's has long been a mystery. The name of a builder is not revealed in the *New York Clipper*, newspaper parade accounts, reminiscences of old calliope players or other sources which usually divulge this type of information. Generally circus proprietors were eager to broadcast in the boldest terms their newest features, where they originated, etc., but in the case of the calliopes no announcements are to be found. Based on the analysis of several photographs and other data, it is hypothesized that the circus owners did not know the name of the instrument builders and thus could not release a name to the trade. Further, it appears the circusmen may have been unwilling to do so because the instruments were second hand devices.

The activities of the Steam Music Company of Worcester, known after 1857 as the American Steam Music Company, spanned from early 1856 to about 1862. The earliest verifiable photograph of an SMC/ASMC calliope is a shot taken about 1875 of the 34 whistle instrument in the possession of Christian and George Kratz of Evansville, Indiana. (Photo 1) It embodies all of the features of the 36 whistle ASMC calliope shown in an engraving published in the December 3, 1859 *Illustrated London News*. The distinctive features of these two calliopes include:

1. A pinned cylinder mechanism featuring an inverted "U" bracket construction located below the rectangular box keyboard.
2. A manifold supported by merchant bar stock legs, reinforced by X bracing at the ends and knee bracing between the legs and the manifold.
3. A circular disc shaped pressure reducing valve located below the far end of the manifold.



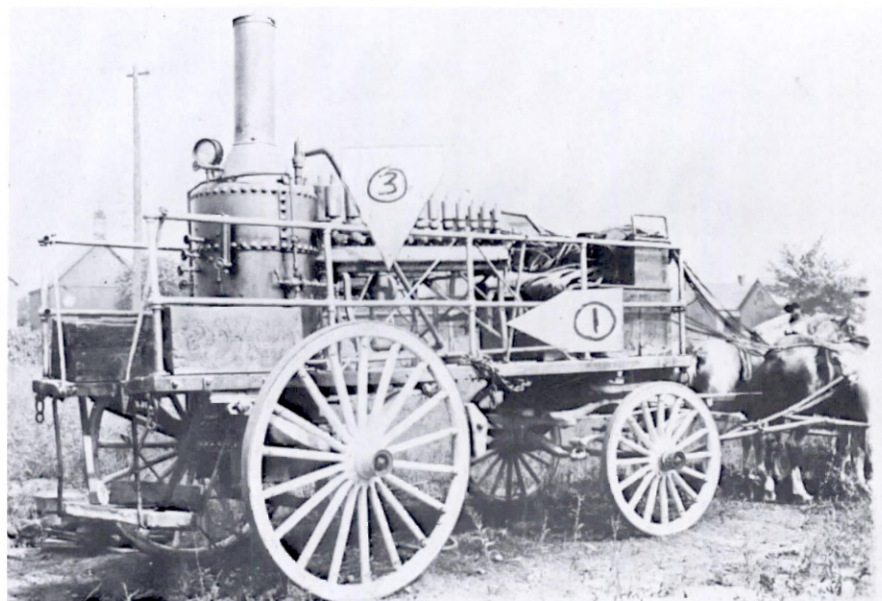
The 34 whistle c. 1858 American Steam Music Co. steam calliope at the Christian Kratz shop about 1875. Note (1) the inverted "U" bracket below the keyboard, (2) the structure of the manifold support legs and (3) the circular pressure reducing valve.

These design signatures are not to be found in any instruments constructed after the demise of the ASMC.

Of the thirty or more circus calliopes

of the 1872 to 1900 period, twelve have been recorded in photographs. Of this group, photographs of four particular calliopes are taken at such an angle that the instrument features can be established. These four, the Adam

The "John Robinson" rail calliope show in a c. 1899 view. Note (1) inverted "U" bracket, (2) bar stock legs and (3) pressure reducing valve. (This calliope was never on Sun Bros. Circus.)







Forepaugh calliope, the John Robinson-Ringling Bros. calliope, the John Robinson rail calliope and the Van Amburg calliope, all housed 20 whistle instruments which exhibit the three ASMC features noted above. The correspondence is best observed between the Kratz owned unit and the John Robinson rail calliope, both of which, from our perspective, were conveniently carried on open sided vehicles. (Photo 2) The instrument size and general features of the familiar Sells Bros. calliope strongly suggest it too originated from the same factory as these four.

The origin of all five calliopes noted above is somewhat obscure. None has a precise origin, they simply appear unannounced in photographs or the *Clipper*. It is fortunate two well known calliope players spoke up in this regard, for they offer clues to bolster our theory. William W. "Bud" Horn, a circus calliope player whose experience dated back to either 1878 or 1872, played the Forepaugh calliope in 1895 on the Leon W. Washburn circus and again in 1901, when it was on the Campbell Bros. Circus. Horn noted it was the same instrument he had played on the packet *Robert Burns* in 1879, and which Forepaugh had bought from steamboat interests at Louisville in 1885.<sup>1</sup> The *Robert Burns* was a

The Adam Forepaugh calliope show on Leon Washburn's Stetson UTC show c. 1896. The inverted "U" bracket can be clearly seen below the keyboard. Two whistles are missing.

bonafide Ohio River steamboat, built at Cincinnati in 1864. Notably, she is one of four Memphis & Cincinnati Packet Co. boats which had steam calliopes. Unfortunately the sole available photograph of the *Robert Burns* is taken at an angle at which the right smoke stack obscures the location where the calliope would have been mounted. In a photograph taken of her sister steamboat, the *Silver Moon*, between 1859 and March 27, 1866, a calliope identical to the twenty whistle instruments in the circus wagons is clearly visible on the hurricane deck, in front of the texas.

Ernest "Deacon" Albright recounted his early calliope playing experiences in a series of articles in the 1942 *Billboard*. Albright started his career in 1900 playing a 34 whistle low pressure steam calliope on the Evansville, Indiana, based steamboat *Fawn*. The geographical location and instrument description strongly infer a connection with the George Kratz owned 34 whistle ASMC instrument or a duplicate unit. Albright recalled that "most of the old calliopes were small,

usually with 20 whistles" and that they had barrel mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> Albright's knowledge came from both first hand experience, as he had played the Forepaugh calliope in 1902, and from conversation with older players.

This information is tempered by additional facts. In 1857 the ASMC introduced a new style calliope. The earliest calliopes were single straight manifold machines, eight to ten feet long, with a keyboard at one end and a pinned cylinder at the other. The new calliope eliminated the space problem of these calliopes by utilizing a double manifold, the common "V" shape. The keyboard was located at the mouth of the "V" and the pinned cylinder mechanism relocated to below the keyboard. These small compact calliopes were especially intended for steamboat application.<sup>3</sup>

Our conclusion is that the instruments in at least four, if not five, early circus calliopes are 1857 designed 20 whistle American Steam Music Company products, which were once mounted on steamboats but were transplanted as the steamboat industry declined and the circus approached its "Golden Age." The instruments' identity as ASMC products is assured by their sharing known ASMC features and by the particular knowledge only ASMC calliopes were equipped with pinned cylinder mechanisms. Their reclamation from the rivers is established since that is the only source where the required number of instruments was available. Coincidentally, calliope wagon builder Henry Ohlsen was located in Cincinnati, an important river city where salvaged steamboat apparatus would be readily available.

1. *New York Clipper*, February 4, 1893, p. 779; *Billboard*, February 1, 1908, p. 47; April 13, 1901, p. 7.
2. *Billboard*, October 31, 1942, p. 43.
3. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 13, 1857.

The Van Amburg calliope instrument has the same bar stock legs found on other ASMC units. This view was taken in 1907. Another 1920 view of this calliope appears with the 1913 Sanger article elsewhere in this issue.



## REQUIEM FOR PIANO (steam)

While remembering the way it used to be

Sound the strong notes; play them for one hundred railroad cars — on some tours more; some less, but thereabouts a hundred in four trains.

Press down on white-hot keys—a requiem for Percherons and Belgians, three hundred twenty-five full-strength; of bands and red and gold and blue upon the streets.

Now make a symphony for canvas—twelve thousand yards of 8-ounce drill; compose a melody describing sight and sound and smell, and children's faces lighted with the thrill of watching it all billow into tents.

Touch keys to musically describe the cookhouse, and then try to conjure up the magic of the late, late afternoon, of shadows slanting on the backyard card games and on acrobats rehearsing and on sleeping clowns.

Capture now the midway as the first faint star is born, and spread your blistered fingers to extol, in bright-toned steam, the warmth of charcoal buckets doing service on chilled nights in autumn Dixie.

Lastly, now, reach back and find a chord to hold forever there, in reverie, the sound of hoofs on pavement late at night, the hub-cap rumble and the corner flare.

Bev Kelley



# LEGISLATING THE SHOWS: VERMONT, 1824 - 1933.

by Stuart Thayer

On October 5, 1840 the Raymond & Waring menagerie unit managed by, or leased to, J.E.M. Hobby & Company was approaching Montpelier, Vermont for a stand on October 15. As was the custom then, they began advertising their appearance ten days in advance. After extolling the merits of the great elephant Hannibal and his ability to carry the New York Brass Band and the daring of their lion keeper, John Shaffer, their ad had this line:

The proprietors would say to the public that in consequence of heavy taxation — to a greater degree than in any other state in the Union, they have not been able to pass through this section of the country ... for some number of years.<sup>1</sup>

In research in American circus history from its beginning to 1850, this is the only complaint of this type that we have found. And it has led us to the conclusion that the canny legislators of Vermont went their brethren in Connecticut one better in handling the question of discouraging field shows — don't ban them, tax them.

In a previous paper we examined the laws of Connecticut relative to circuses.<sup>2</sup> In that state they were simply outlawed, an approach similar to the 1919 Federal prohibition statutes and like it, an invitation to the public to ignore it. Circuses played Connecticut, but did so carefully, not advertising their presence, and, as far as is known, only one showman was ever prosecuted under the act.

New Englanders in general and "Yankees" in particular — to make an ethnic separation — had little use for the amusements of the day. Michel Chevalier wrote:

It is from [the Yankee] that the country has taken a general tone of austere severity that is religious and even bigoted; because of him all sorts of amusements, which among [Europeans] are considered innocent relaxations, are here proscribed as immoral pleasures.<sup>3</sup>

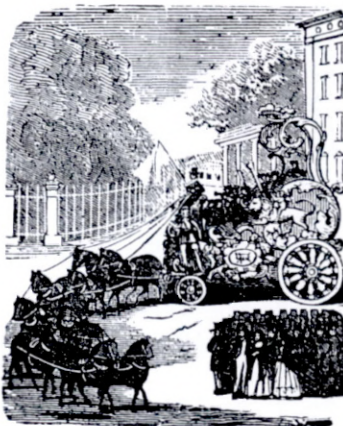
Regulation of shows by the Vermont legislature had an early beginning. In Public Act 26, dated November 18, 1824, menageries were to be fined no more than fifty dollars, nor less than ten dollars for showing in the state, unless local governments wanted to license them. In that case local selectmen

## RAYMOND & WARING'S UNRIVALLED AND LONG ESTABLISHED MENAGERIE

recently fitted and embellished and with entirely new decorations, trappings, equipage, &c., for 1847—containing an extensive and varied collection of the most rare and interesting productions of nature, which affords to all an ample source for study and reflection on the science of NATURAL HISTORY.

This Menagerie, on entering each town or village, forms a most imposing train or procession, preceded by a gorgeous

### ROMAN CHARIOT Literally covered with Gold!



The splendor and Magnificence of this Gorgeous and Colossal Carriage baffles description. Whoever has read of the Funeral Chariot of Alexander, or the Triumphal Car of Nero, may form some conception of the grandeur of this superlatively beautiful vehicle, which was taken from an antique model recently exhibited in London. It has required the constant labor of twenty men for nine months to complete it, at an expense of more than FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS!

The Length of Chariot, 30 feet.  
Height to summit of Canopy, 20 feet.  
The weight in full, 8000 pounds.

The Chariot will be followed by THIRTY CARRIAGES, containing the various animals in this immense exhibition, drawn by ONE HUNDRED HORSES!

The Exhibition of this Menagerie is rendered intensely interesting by the Wonderful and unparalleled performance of

### MR. PIERCE,

the Great Napoleon of the age, with

#### Lions, Tigers and Leopards.

This great Artist will fondle, caress, and render himself, apparently, as one of these animals in their own Den. After this he assumes command, orders each to their respective departments, and finally signalizes himself by driving an

#### African Lion in Harness!

☐ The animals in this collection are confidently offered for public inspection, as being the choicest and most perfect specimens ever exhibited. The majority of them have been imported during the last two years, without regard to price, and form, not only the best, but the

#### ☐ LARGEST COLLECTION ☐

ever presented to the public.

The Menagerie will exhibit at WINDSOR on THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7TH.

The Procession will enter the town about 9 o'clock in the morning.

#### ADMISSION ONLY 25 CENTS.

Children under ten years, 12½ cents.

☐ The above will exhibit at Montpelier on Friday, Oct. 1st; at Northfield on Saturday, 2d; at West Randolph on Monday, 4th; at Woodstock on Tuesday, 5th; and at Norwich on Wednesday, 6th.

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could issue permits for no more than two days at a cost of no more than fifty nor less than two dollars.<sup>4</sup>

To the historian such an act immediately raises the question that some travelling menagerie in 1824 created a problem. Unfortunately, the burning of the State House in Montpelier in 1857 led to the loss of most of the early newspapers in the state so that it is impossible to piece together what one would describe as a complete history of shows playing Vermont. Two menageries were in New Hampshire and northwest Massachusetts in 1824, and we would suspect them as the cause of the legislative action. Both were called Grand Caravan of Living Animals — generic titles — but are distinguishable because one carried the famous elephant, Tippoo Sultan, and the other Hector, the lion, an unusually large specimen. The 1824 statute defines a menagerie as "any living animal or other natural curiosity." In 1833, the size of the license fee was increased to a maximum of three hundred and a minimum of fifty dollars.

That menagerie proprietors could live with these fees cannot be doubted. We find them in the state in each year between 1829 and 1835. In 1835 we also find the first circus that advertised in a surviving newspaper. This was Nathan Howes' combination that he rather awkwardly titled Mammoth Elephant, Menagerie and Circus. In 1836 both the Boston Lion Circus of Buckley & Weeks and J. J. Hall's Mammoth Eagle Circus performed in Vermont. Unlike the other two, Hall was on his way to Quebec, on a route which became common in later years, using Vermont as a corridor wherein one went up the Connecticut River, along Lake Champlain and into the Richelieu Valley to Montreal.

These 1836 incursions apparently woke the legislators to the fact that their previous law did not include circuses, so Public Act 24 was passed on November 16, 1836 and it read:

In the late 1840's, Vermont was more hospitable toward menageries than circuses. In 1847 the eastern unit of Raymond and Waring's Menagerie played nine dates in the state, including a stand in Montpelier, the state capital. The ad is from *The Vermont Chronicle*, Windsor, Vermont, 15 September 1847. Pfening collection.



Circus riding, theatrical exhibitions, juggling or sleight of hand, ventriloquism and magic arts, shall be, and are, declared to be common and public nuisances and offenses against the state.

For presenting any of these offensive shows a person could be fined up to two hundred dollars. The inclusion in the act of other forms of popular entertainment than the circus indicates less a bias brought on by a single event, than the general attitude of the populace toward such offerings. The effect was, of course, that circuses ceased to play the state, or if they did they adopted the same course they did in Connecticut, which was not to advertise, at least in the newspapers. As we know, newspaper advertising was not considered important by impresarios of the day, their preference being for handbills.

Returning to Hobby & Company and their complaint of the high fees in 1840, we find them stating that having found it rather convenient to use a portion of the state (they also played Woodstock and undoubtedly smaller places) they thought proper to venture there "at the enormous tax of fifty dollars per day." They used three tents, requiring a lot eighty by one hundred-fifty feet and had sixty horses and forty men in their operation. This was a daily expense of one-hundred dollars, one hundred-fifty when the tax was added. "Add to this occasional rainy days, which the proprietors must consequently suffer, and it almost amounts to a direct prohibition." The legislators probably hoped that it did.

That this plea was made in the newspaper serving the state capitol and in the second week of the 1840 session of the legislature tells us that Hobby & Company hoped to reach more eyes than those of the village populace.

In 1844 the act of 1836 was made more specific and proscribed "any games, tricks, plays, wax figures or other shows, ventriloquism, tumbling, rope dancing, puppet shows or feats of uncommon dexterity or agility of body." Circuses were accorded their own section of the act by this wording:

No person shall make or use any circus of any description, or any open space, area or edifice for sports, for the exhibition of any extraordinary feats of any horse, or horse kind, or any other animal, for reward or gain . . .

Further, persons were prohibited from making, causing to be made, aiding, assisting or abetting the exhibition of horse feats. All these sins called for a fine of two hundred dollars. The act also raised the fine for exhibiting a menagerie without a license from local selectmen from fifty to two hundred dollars. The minimum license

fee was increased from two to ten dollars.

What might have happened was that a rope dancer or wax museum exhibitor had gotten around the 1836 act because of its loose definitions. The 1844 version reads very much like the Connecticut law then in force.

Brattleboro, Vermont, hard by the New Hampshire line and of easy access from both Keene and Claremont, was an attractive stop for travelling shows. They must have felt they could spend one day in Vermont and risk the two hundred dollar fine since an average gross would exceed that amount. In 1843, 1844 and 1845 Rockwell & Stone played Brattleboro, as did Sands, Lent & Company in 1847. Apparently, the local selectmen ignored the state law upon those occasions.

Despite this situation there never was any great influx of shows into the state. The population was small and the roads not of the best. These things, along with legislative disapproval undoubtedly discouraged showmen. As late as September, 1860 the *New York Clipper* stated that no circuses or caravans were allowed in Vermont. This was not strictly the case, but no doubt was the attitude held by show people.

There was one exception. In 1861 T. Alston Brown, an inveterate writer of news to the *Clipper*, was agent for H. P. Madigan's circus and wrote from Vermont that business was fine there. He also opined that after hearing this everyone would rush in and ruin it, but no such thing happened.<sup>5</sup>

In 1865 the legislature gave up and passed Public Act 50 on November 9 allowing local selectmen to license circuses up to two days at ten to one hundred dollars a day. In this, they lagged behind Connecticut five years, that state having given circuses the green light in 1860. But shows were required by Vermont to have a state permit costing \$1,000 to \$3,000 and permitting them to show ninety days. Needless to say, at a possible fine of two hundred dollars a show would risk at least five days in the state. This act was re-written in 1867 (P.A. 56) to allow the selectmen to revoke a license if they decided the circus was a public nuisance.

To follow this to its conclusion, the state license, as expensive as it was, remained on the books until 1915. In 1894 officers of state, county or town fair associations were given the power to regulate and prevent "all theatrical, circus and mountebank exhibitions

John O'Brien took his P. T. Barnum show on an extensive tour of Vermont in June of 1874. By this time the mores of an earlier generation had changed enough that even a nefarious grifter like O'Brien was tolerated, if not welcomed, in the state. Pfening collection.

THE WORLD'S GREAT OBJECT TEACHER'S  
CULMINATING TRIUMPH.

P. T. BARNUM'S  
GREAT TRAVELLING MUSEUM.  
Menagerie and World's Fair!



IN CAN AS COLLEGES, CANOPTING ACHES  
COMPREHENDING  
TWENTY GREAT SHOWS IN ONE!  
AND OVER 1,000 MEN AND HORSES  
Will Exhibit, in all its vast entirety, at  
**Burlington, Wednesday, June 10th,**  
Giving Daily Three Full, Grand and Complete Expositions, at 10 A. M. and 1 and 7 P. M.  
**100,000 CARDINAL CURIOSITIES!**  
1,500 MAGNIFICENT REPRESENTATIVE ANIMALS, BEASTS, BIRDS,  
REPTILES, AMPHIBIOUS MARINE MONSTERS,  
*Steam Engine Operated, Automatic and Polytechnic In-*  
*stitute, and Stupendous Inter-Continental Amphitheatre*  
WITH SEATS FOR 15,000 SPECTATORS, AND TWO SEPARATE REVENUE RINGS.  
In both of which appear, at one and the same time,  
**DAN CASTELLO'S**  
International Hippodrome,  
**JAMES McNEVILLE'S**  
Great Australian Circus,  
**James Cooke's Royal Circus,**  
—AND—  
**BERNARD'S ARENA** of Pure Performers,  
Circus Gymnastics and Acrobats, especially for  
women's Great Travelling World's Fair.  
In every wonder-world department of which a  
SINGULAR and CUNNING TRICKERY, children and some  
adults, will be amazed, with FREE admission  
granted to all who buy the Life of P. T. Barnum  
written by himself, and published by himself, for  
\$2.00 in \$1.00. — Worth a 50¢ Greenback to a  
beginner. — House clearing.  
Presenting such an "immense multitude of  
Spectators and Monstrous Feats, the  
**Marvelous Talking Machine**  
Which, Laughs, Sings and Talks in various lan-  
guages, with perfect fluency, in great imitation of  
the human voice.  
**ADMIRAL DOT!**  
The Capital of the Dwarf, and greatest man that  
ever lived. In years old, 32 inches high, weighs 55  
pounds.  
**ONLY LIVING GIRAFFES**  
In America, with one of which none more than 15  
years of age, and one of which is an "immense" in  
height and strength.  
**ONLY SCHOOL OF CAPTIVE LIVING  
SEA LIONS!**  
North Pacific Monarchs, weighing 1,000 pounds each,  
and transported in large tanks of water.  
**Largest Living Rhinoceros**  
Ever known. An African Monarch, as large as an  
elephant, and weighing over 4,000 pounds.  
**The Famous and Feroocious Fiji Cannibals!**  
Nine Representatives of their heathen, flesh-devouring race in Civilization, and rescued by Mr. Barnum  
from their capture, by whom they were introduced to be seen. The  
**WONDERFUL HORSE-HIDING GOAT, "ALEXIS,"**  
An animal equipping superior to many human artists.  
**A WORLD OF AUTOMATIC TRIUMPHS!**  
From France, Switzerland and Germany, never before placed on exhibition.  
**Three Constellations of Circus Celebrities**  
Which displayed with an unequalled and unexampled. The presentation of the greatest Riders,  
Leapers, Gymnasts, Trampolines, Clowns, Conjurators, Performers, and general performers, of every  
nation, ever engaged. — More than enough for present Amos T. Tabor to constitute a more of ordinary  
circuses.  
**THE BEST EDUCATED ELEPHANTS, CAMELS,  
TRICK HORSES, PONIES, MULES,**  
And other animals, and more of them, than were  
before exhibited at one time. This Menagerie  
Amusement Entertaining being veritably  
**"THE WORLD'S SHOW"**  
Exceeding an expenditure of over a Million of Dol-  
lars, and a daily entertainment of 1,000, whose  
arrival in town is heralded with nothing less  
than a typhoon.  
**HIGHEST PAGEANT**  
Earth has ever seen, showing in magnitude and massive grandeur a dense Roman triumph. This  
large Highway Holiday Parade displays a transporting LEADER OF LEADER, and as a triumphal  
and Allegorical Spectacular Demonstration is unexampled.  
**The Eighth Wonder of the World!**  
The only exhibition in America recognized and endorsed by the Religious Press, and daily printed by  
several Churches and Ministers, and the only one in the world receiving THE GOLDEN PRIZE OF  
AMMUNITION.  
The entire Great World's Fair will also exhibit at  
**MIDDLEBURY, THURSDAY, JUNE 11. RICHMOND, THURSDAY, JUNE 11.**  
May 30, June 2, 6, 10 & 12



and shows" within two hundred yards of the fairgrounds on fair days. In 1906 the law provided a definition of what a circus was, which leads one to wonder at its origin.

... the word 'circus' as used in this chapter, shall mean a company of performers with their equipage, travelling from place to place and exhibiting or parading in the open air or under canvas, entertainment consisting principally of feats of horsemanship, acrobatic displays and the exhibition of wild animals, or any two of these features.

This reads very much like recent scholarly attempts to define a circus.<sup>6</sup> The definition was included without changing the remainder of the act.

Ballard, Bailey & Co.'s French Circus played Windsor, Vermont, on 12 July 1855. Like Brattleboro, Windsor is on the New Hampshire line, and presumably the show played only this one date in Vermont, then jumped back into New Hampshire. This ad appeared in the *Vermont Journal*, Windsor, Vermont, 29 June 1855. Pfening collection.

**Ballard, Bailey & Co.'s  
FRENCH CIRCUS!**



Comprising the very celebrated  
**TOURNAIRE TROUPE,**  
With all the **Distinguished Artistes** who have appeared in this country during the last five years, and also those whose performances in Europe have secured to them a world-wide reputation,  
**Will Exhibit at Cornish,  
NEAR THE WINDSOR BRIDGE,  
On Thursday, July 12.**  
**TICKETS, 25 CENTS.**  
Doors open at 2 P. M. and 7 P. M. To commence at 2½ and 7½.  
It is impossible to no more than simply mention a few of the names of the various Artistes connected with this magnificent  
**CIRCUS!**

In 1915 Public Act 203 abolished the state licensing, as we mentioned, but called for the commissioner of taxes to grant permits to railroad shows with a daily fee based on the number of cars (i.e., 1 to 12 cars, \$30.00 daily; 12-25, \$40.00; 25-40, \$50.00; 40-60, \$60.00; over 60 cars, \$70.00).

All of these laws, saving the right of selectmen to license circuses, were repealed by 1933 and Vermont joined the rest of the Union in so far as there was no longer any public bias toward field shows.

1. *Vermont Patriot*, (Montpelier), October 5, 1840.
2. Stuart Thayer, "Anti-Circus Laws in Connecticut, 1773-1840," *Bandwagon*, January-February, 1976, p. 18-20.
3. Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States* (Paris, 1836, reprinted Ithaca, 1969) p. 107.
4. All law references from various issues of *Compiled Statutes of Vermont and Vermont, Revised Statutes*.
5. *New York Clipper*, September 21, 1861.
6. For an example read Marcello Truzzi, "Circus and Side Shows," in Myron Matlaw, editor, *American Popular Entertainment: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment*, (Westport, Connecticut, 1979) pp. 175-185.

## Photo Supplement

# Gentry Bros. Circus, Season of 1929

by Joseph T. Bradbury

We are pleased to present this splendid set of 8 "new" Gentry Bros. 1929 photos as a supplement to this article on this show that appeared in the Sept-Oct 1978 *Bandwagon*. Photos of the Floyd and Howard King railroad circuses are extremely rare and during the series on these shows we often reminded *Bandwagon* readers to advise on any additional shots that might turn up. We can thank CHS

members Bill Brinley, John Olean, and CFA Lew Corbit for providing this historic set for the pages of *Bandwagon*. An old phototographer from South Norwalk, Conn. gave the originals to John Olean who in turn made them available to Bill Brinley to have reproduced for our use. Lew Corbit, a Bridgeport photographer, did the excellent print work. The 15 car Gentry Bros. Circus played South Norwalk, Conn. in both 1928 and 1929 and there was some

initial confusion as to the exact date the set was taken. The appearance of the 3 elephants in two of the shots should pinpoint the correct date as June 26, 1929. In 1928 Gentry Bros. carried 6 elephants and eye-witnesses in New England that season counted that number on the lot. In 1929 there were only three, Eva, Danny, a male tusker, and Mom, also called Mama Mary, all clearly pictured in this set.



Photo No. 1 — Loaded flat cars of Gentry Bros. Circus, South Norwalk, Conn., June 26, 1929. Note all photos from collection of John Olean.



Photo No. 2 — Light plant wagon coming down the runs at South Norwalk, Conn., June 26, 1929. Note overhead electric wires of the New Haven Railroad.





Photo No. 3 — Gentry Bros. Circus coaches in rail yards at South Norwalk, Conn., June 26, 1929.



Photo No. 4 — Light plant wagon on Gentry Bros. lot at South Norwalk, Conn., June 26, 1929.



Photo No. 5 — Gentry Bros. baggage wagons on lot at South Norwalk, Conn., during morning set-up, June 26, 1929.

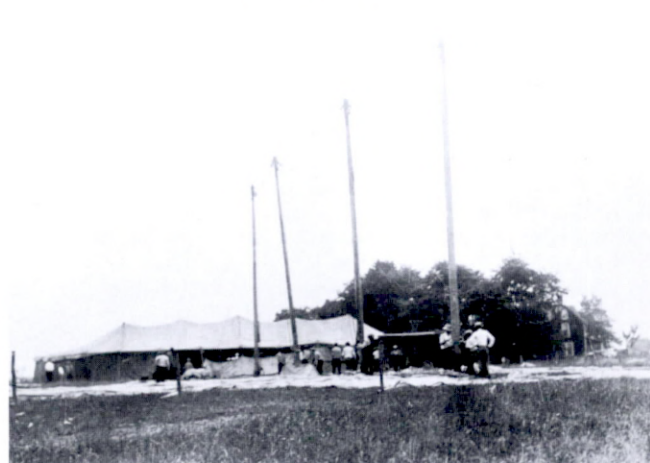


Photo No. 6 — Center poles and canvas spread of the Gentry Bros. big top on lot at South Norwalk, Conn., June 26, 1929. Padroom is in rear.



Photo No. 7 — Gentry Bros.' three elephants, Eva, Danny (male tusker in center), and Mom (also called Mama Mary) with other lead stock on Gentry Bros. lot.

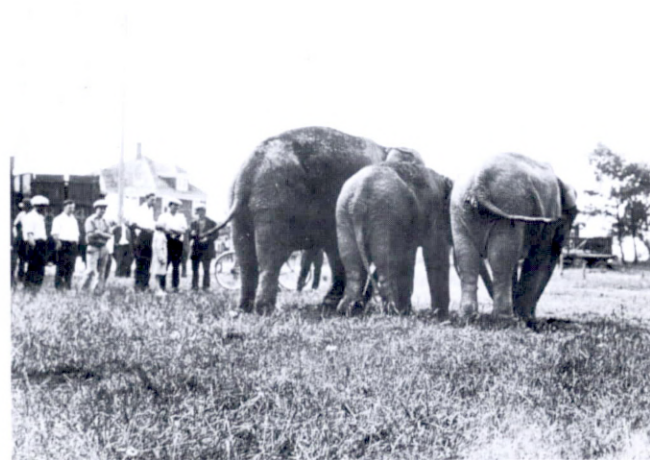


Photo No. 8 — Gentry Bros. elephant herd, Eva, Danny (male tusker in center) and Mom (also called Mama Mary) on lot at South Norwalk, Conn., June 29, 1929.



## The 1981 Circus Historical Society Convention

This gathering of the faithful, which will be remembered as the first held in two cities, began in Milwaukee on 20 May and concluded in Chicago on the 24th. Approximately 25 members attended the Wisconsin portion of the program, while a much larger number appeared in our 2nd city. Perhaps twenty hard core addicts made both dates.

The feature of the first stand was the exhibition "Center Ring: The Artist" at the Milwaukee Art Museum. Organized by CHS member Dean Jensen, the show explored why the circus has held such fascination to the creative artist, and included works by not only the great civilian artists but also posters, carvings and banners by the old masters at the Strobridge Lithograph Company, the Fielding Wagon Works, and other circus suppliers. Jensen wrote the exhibit catalog, which is an important contribution to the literature of the circus, and elaborated his views in a special tour of the gallery for the members.

As in the past, a number of papers were given. Joanne Joys presented a slide show on wild animal trainers, as did the ubiquitous Dean Jensen on Lillian Leitzel. Stuart Thayer discussed the economics of shows in the 1830's and 1840's; Fred Pfening III rambled on about 19th century circus trade periodicals; Fred Dahlinger disclosed new information on early calliope instruments; and John Polacsek reported on his research on the firm of Ludlow and Smith. Lively debate followed all papers.

The conventioners were also treated to Walt Disney's "Toby Tyler," Charlie Chaplin's "The Circus," and a Canadian documentary on the Frazer

**This group of CHS members posed just before the parade left the forming area. They are left to right, Fred D. Pfening, Jr.; Gordon Potter; Ward Hall; Leonard Farley and President Tom Parkinson.**



Bros. Circus. The Disney film showed many of the wagons in the Chicago parade, and the Chaplin flick showed quick glimpses of some Al G. Barnes parade wagons on their last legs.

After consuming much fine German food, everybody stayed up too late in the Pfister Hotel bar and lobby swapping the usual lies. As this was most members' first return to the historic Pfister since the days of the great Schlitz parades, pleasant memories of past revelries were recalled in abundance.



On the 22nd the caravan moved to Chicago where two more papers were given. One by president Tom Parkinson recounted the recent auction of circus posters he attended in New York. The other, by Fred Pfening III, discussed his project to publish a book of the collected letters of William H. Woodcock.

Side show impresario Ward Hall was the banquet speaker. He recalled his days with Ben Davenport's Dailey Bros. Circus and other shows, his career in the ten-in-one business, and detailed grifters' techniques in fleecing the locals. His re-enactment of a typical Milt Robbins side show talk on the Dailey show in the 1940's was perhaps the highlight of his presentation. To top off the evening Jay Marshall, a professional magician, gave a demonstration of the card games played by grifters in circus side shows.

The center ring in Chicago belonged,

of course, to the parade staged by the Circus World Museum and the city of Chicago. When members weren't on the exhibition grounds at the Navy Pier inspecting the wagons, they were visiting in the hospitality room provided by the Circus World Museum and ably run by Earl and Betty Schmid.

The parade itself was as fine or finer than any of the previous ones in Milwaukee. The weather was perfect, and the entire spectacle went like clock work. The only mishap occurred when one of the riders was thrown by an elephant. The wagons looked as good as the day they rolled out of the Bode, Fielding, Sebastian and other wagon shops years ago, the result of most of them receiving a thorough going over and new paint job in preparation for the march. Two wagons, a Cap Curtis Hagenbeck Wallace cage, and a trampoline wagon built by the Circus World Museum, paraded under the CWM banner for the first time. The museum's contract with the city of Chicago called for the use of only union bands, and these experienced musicians delighted the crowds with their renditions of traditional circus music. Purists were pleased by the lack of antique automobiles, marching bands and other non-authentic units. Some wondered why one of the wagons was pulled by a Mack truck, forgetting perhaps that this was the way Fred Buchanan did it on Robbins Bros. in 1931.

It was the parade that attracted members to Chicago, and doubtless few regreted the trip. The sight of Ward Hall scrambling to get pictures of the wagons like a First of May exemplified the excitement of the event. It was a fitting finale to another enjoyable CHS convention. Fred D. Pfening III

**The three arch Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus cage No. 23 made its first parade appearance in Chicago. It is shown on Michigan Avenue.**

